

THE  
COASTWISE TRADE  
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM  
PAST AND PRESENT  
AND ITS POSSIBILITIES

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF  
SIR ALFRED READ

H. A. Arnold

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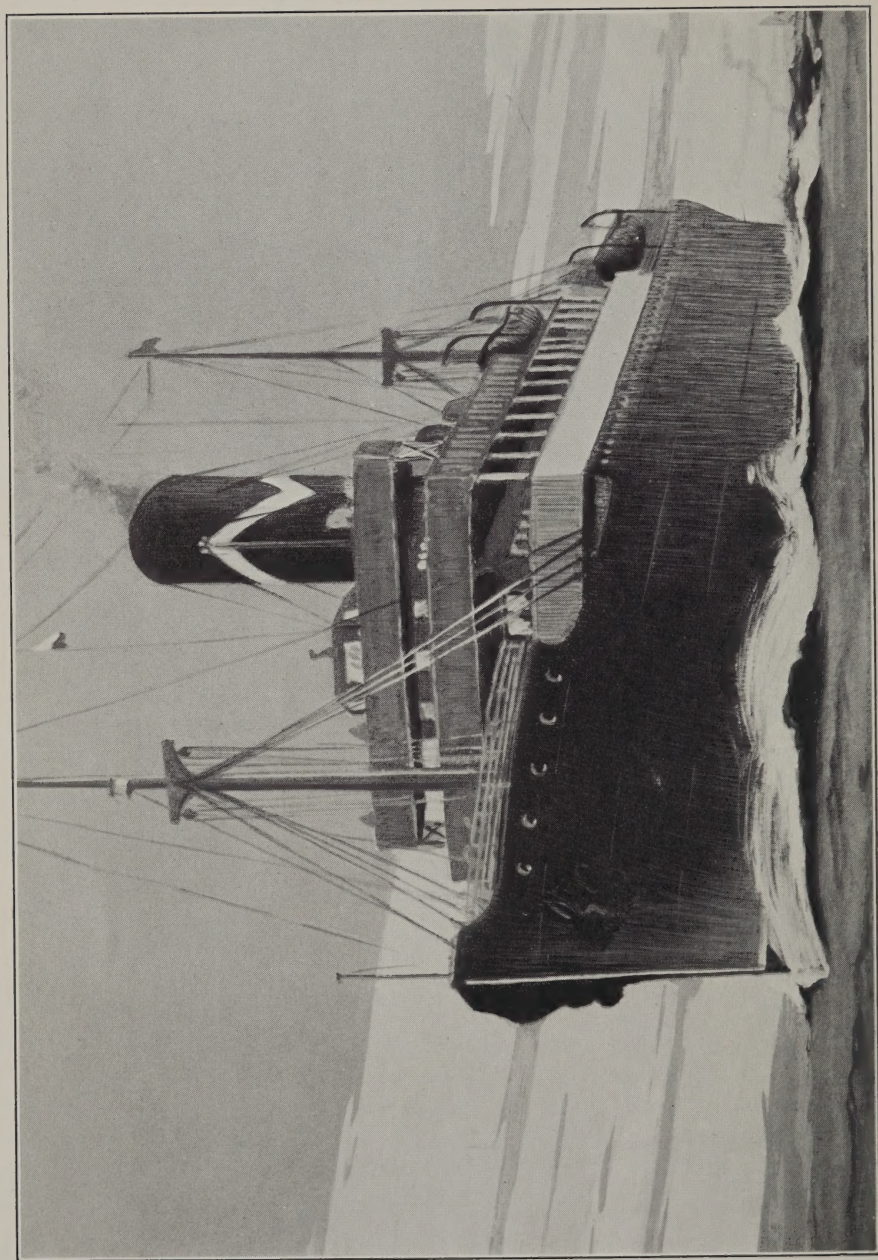


THE COASTWISE TRADE OF  
THE UNITED KINGDOM









S.S. *Southern Coast*, 1872 tons. Coast Lines, Ltd. Fast Passenger and Cargo Service, Liverpool-London.



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COASTWISE TRADE  
OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM

PAST AND PRESENT  
AND  
ITS POSSIBILITIES

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TO  
SIR NORMAN HILL  
BARONET

WHO HAS DEVOTED THE WHOLE OF HIS LIFE  
TO THOSE WHO "GO DOWN TO THE SEA  
IN SHIPS AND DO BUSINESS IN  
GREAT WATERS."





## INTRODUCTION

THE growth of the Coastal and Cross-Channel Section of the British Mercantile Marine is a fascinating subject, but its study is one of remarkable difficulty. In this volume an admirable attempt has been made to simplify the story by extracting from historical records those features which deal purely with Shipping in its relation to the domestic transport of the British Isles.

As one whose whole life has been engaged in the organisation of Coastal and Cross-Channel Services, I heartily commend this little volume to the earnest consideration of all occupying positions of responsibility, whether in the Shipping Industry itself, the Ports upon whose efficiency the Shipping Industry depends, or in those branches of Commerce which the Coastwise Trade can serve.

ALFRED READ.

LONDON,  
*December, 1925.*



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# THE COASTWISE TRADE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

## CHAPTER I

THE reaction that has followed our gigantic efforts in the Great War and the period of industrial and commercial depression through which we are passing seem for the time to have robbed many of our fellow citizens of that enthusiasm, high energy, and faith in our national star that formerly characterised the people of these islands. Gloomily contemplating the vast army of unemployed, the diminished industrial output, with the consequent reduction in the volume of exports, and the gigantic debt that presses so heavily on our shoulders, they ask themselves if Britain has had its day, and if it must in the future surrender its pride of place to other nations which are better equipped for the fierce commercial struggle of modern times.

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Yet there is little warrant for this pessimism. We are confronted with a condition. The condition will alter, and, as we have every reason to believe that the national qualities which for hundreds of years have been building up and consolidating the Empire remain unimpaired, we may look forward calmly, though perhaps somewhat anxiously, to the future. It is no time for dismal prediction. High and concerted national effort will provide the solution of our difficulties.

One particularly gratifying outcome of the Great War was the proof that not only was the British race guiltless of the lethargy and decadence with which its enemies had charged it, but that the national institutions came unscathed through the fiercest tests that could have been applied to them. The Constitution, the Army, the Navy, the Judicial System, the Banking and Financial Systems, among others, adapted themselves, one and all, to the unprecedented conditions, and with unvarying success. Last of all, but second to none, came the British Mercantile Marine, in many respects the highest expression of our national genius.

The history of its gigantic contribution to the achievement of final victory can never be

adequately told. It was not a spectacular effort. The pomp and panoply of active warfare was missing. But in its patient, untiring, and indomitable performance of a humdrum task, the monotony of which was only broken by the constant peril of death, the Mercantile Marine surpassed all that even its high traditions entitled us to expect from it.

Forced into an unnatural expansion by the transfer of an enormous number of vessels to the Naval Service, mobilising from every port vessels that had long since been destined for the ship-breaker's yard, reinforcing the number of trained seamen with the flotsam and jetsam of the docks of London, Liverpool, Cardiff and the like, facing shipwreck, mines, shell-fire, and the deadly torpedo, the British Mercantile Marine for four long years transported vast armies across the seven seas, provided tens of millions of fighting men with the food, equipment, and munitions that they required, and still fulfilled its normal task of carrying on the great overseas commerce of the British Isles.

At the outset of the Great War the British Mercantile Marine had attained an almost unassailable position in the world of commerce.



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Various foreign nations, jealous of its supremacy, had striven to check its progress, and by means of bounties, preferential rates, Navigation Acts, and other aggressive measures had endeavoured to gain a place in the sun for the ships of their own nationals. But the extraordinary and inherent British aptitude for all that pertains to the sea and ships had enabled our Mercantile Marine to overcome these obstacles, and about one-half of the world's ocean traffic was carried by British sailors in British bottoms.

In the year 1913-1914 the world's gross tonnage was in round figures 46,970,000 tons. Of this no less than 18,696,000 tons, or nearly 40 per cent., belonged to the United Kingdom. Our nearest competitors then were the United States with 5,427,000 tons (which included the vast fleet of the Great Lakes), and Germany with 5,000,000 tons.

It must be remembered, however, when comparing these figures, that the majority of British vessels are of better type and later build than those owned by other nations. Old ships, which cannot obtain the rating of A1 at Lloyd's, are usually purchased from British owners by foreigners.

During the Great War our Mercantile Marine suffered appalling losses. Close on seven-and-a-half million tons of shipping were sunk, chiefly by enemy action, and at one stage it was predicted that when peace did come it would find us no longer holding first place.

But the national energy was roused to greater efforts, and though our preponderance over our nearest rivals is not so great as it was, our supremacy is not seriously challenged.

According to the latest returns for the year 1924-1925, out of a total world's gross tonnage of 64,000,000 tons our share is over 19,000,000, or approximately 30 per cent. Next in order come the United States with 16,000,000 tons, Japan with nearly 4,000,000 tons, France 3,500,000 tons, and Germany 3,000,000 tons.

These figures on analysis are more flattering to us than would appear, because the vast losses incurred by the United States Shipping Board make it appear unlikely that even a wealthy nation like the Americans will continue to defy the laws of economics in attempting to maintain a great but artificial Mercantile Marine. In that case we shall more and more regain our dominating position.

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The spectacle presented by the British Mercantile Marine moving to and fro on every sea is one of amazing interest. Vast and luxurious liners crowd the sea lanes between our great ports and those of North and South America. Mighty cargo boats, laden with the wheat of Oregon and California, beat their way round Cape Horn or crawl through the Panama Canal *en route* to Liverpool or Glasgow. Through the Mediterranean, the oldest sea route in history, come the passenger steamers that connect the Home Country with the great Dominions of Australia and New Zealand, as well as with the vast dependency of India. Here, too, is an increasing stream of cargo boats conveying the tea, rubber, jute, rice, and spices of the East to our shores, and giving in exchange our manufactured products. Similarly to East, West, and South Africa, and to the great new republics of South America, a host of ships make their way with the punctuality of passenger trains.

The foregoing are more or less the plutocrats of the shipping world. Apart from these, there is a host of British vessels scattered throughout the seven seas and performing the most diverse



services. If the coastal trade of the United States be excepted, there is no ocean, no sea or navigable river, no port of any importance in which British ships do not take their full share of the burden of commerce.

It must be remembered, for example, that practically one-third of the ocean-going vessels sailing under the British flag do not enter a home port from one year's end to another. In the China seas a considerable portion of the coasting traffic is in our hands, and is carried on in vessels having their base at Hong-Kong, Shanghai, or Canton. Again, our sea enterprise has won for us a substantial share in the trade between the Far East and North America, and the raw silk that a Japanese has grown is often carried in a British vessel to San Francisco for the benefit of an American silk manufacturer in New Jersey.

There is, in fact, no limit except the shore, to the activities of the British Mercantile Marine. Grimy colliers nosing their way into the rainless ports of Peru; ramshackle vessels, their decks packed with Mohammedan pilgrims, steering through the oily Red Sea to Jiddah; tramps touting for pennyworths of cargo at odd ports

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from Buenos Aires to New Orleans ; tankers from San Francisco ; timber boats from the White Sea ; well-found refrigerated ships conveying the meats of Australia, New Zealand, or the Argentine ; ocean-going vessels that sail from Liverpool, and after crossing the Atlantic make their way to Iquitos, on the mighty Amazon, two thousand miles inland—these are but a few of the multifarious operations carried on by vessels flaunting the British flag.

As a result, not only do we derive large annual revenues, but, directly and indirectly, a stimulus is given to many other industrial and commercial enterprises.

For example, shipbuilding, an industry in which our supremacy is still maintained, owes its successful record to the prosperity of the Mercantile Marine.

Again, since the days when half the world's shipping sailed under our flag, we have been in a position of acknowledged authority on all that pertains to the high seas and shipping, so that "A1 at Lloyd's" is a familiar symbol at Nagasaki or Santos. From this has developed that immensely valuable branch of commerce—Marine Insurance.

A curious sidelight on our national reputation for matters concerning the sea is shown by the fact that disputes between shipowners of two non-British nationalities are often referred to an English judge for decision. Any day a sightseer in London may wander into the Law Courts and be fortunate enough to witness the extraordinary spectacle of counsel pleading, say, the cause of a Norwegian steamer which has suffered in collision with an Italian steamer in a South American harbour.

Moreover the ubiquity of our shipping has done a great deal to make us not only the money market of the world, but also to provide us with that entrepôt trade from which so much of our national income is derived.

From the foregoing it is evident, therefore, that it is almost impossible to overrate the importance of the British Mercantile Marine and, moreover, that the national interests demand that everything possible should be done to enhance its ability to compete with the Mercantile Marines of other nations. Above all else it is essential that Government departments should not be permitted to inflict burdens which are not borne by the ships of competing nationals.

## CHAPTER II

PROUD as every Briton must be of the magnitude and character of our Mercantile Marine, it should be remembered that it did not "spring full-blossomed from the thorny stem of time," but, like "Topsy," has "just growed" from the days when the voyages of the original British mariners were limited to a hazardous cruise of a few miles along the coast.

Up to the time of the Roman Invasion, 55 B.C., sea-trade in the British Isles was of no importance, but with the settlement of the Romans in Britain and the consequent *Pax Romana*, ports and coastal communication rapidly increased. Amongst these ports London, Southampton and Richborough were the foremost, while among the others were Sandwich, Bristol, Chester, Winchelsea, Rochester, Portsmouth, Grimsby, Norwich, York, Cambridge, and Lincoln. These last three ports were important



centres for sea-going vessels until the size of the ships made it necessary to seek deeper water in Hull, Lynn, and Boston respectively.

All these ports developed a considerable trade not only with each other, but also with the neighbouring ports of Gaul. English oysters were then a great delicacy, and these, with cattle, hunting dogs, skins, slaves, corn, tin, and lead were exported, while the chief imports were wine, salt, earthenware, glassware, amber, timber, and resin. Between the northern and the southern ports of Britain there was a constant stream of sea traffic, the former exchanging their fish and hides for wine, cider, wheat, and oats.

Piracy was one of the greatest drawbacks to trade, and when it is remembered that at the end of the Roman occupation there were, it is stated, no fewer than 800 vessels alone engaged in the corn trade between Britain and Gaul it will be realised what an incentive was provided for the North Sea freebooters. With the departure of the Romans, the defence of England by sea as well as by land broke down, and first the Picts and Scots, and then a more terrible enemy still, the Vikings of the North Sea, came in swarms to harry the trading ships.

For hundreds of years trade appeared to have languished, and no evidence is available of any development in ships or sea communication in England. The Anglo-Saxons who conquered and colonised England were descendants of a seafaring race, but they themselves were for a long period unable to face the Danish marauders at sea, and it was not until the days of Athelstan and Alfred that any determined effort was made to secure law and order off the English coast. Alfred, whose genius gave him an insight into the meaning of sea-power, set himself out to challenge the supremacy of the marauding Danes on their own element. He devised new types of ships, fast, seaworthy, and steady, and fully twice as long as those already in vogue. With this Saxon navy he more than held his own against his less civilised kinsmen, who were now as ever no more than bloodthirsty pirates.

It must be remembered that during these early days in which Britain was developing her maritime power, there was no division of its elements such as exist to-day. The service in which a ship was engaged changed according to the necessities of the time. A voyage between two British ports might be followed by a voyage

to the Continent or the Mediterranean, or at the King's command, the trading ship of to-day became the fighting ship of to-morrow. Little progress seems to have been made during this period in the size of the sea-going vessels. In fact, none of the thousands of vessels which were used in the Norman invasion of 1066 exceeded thirty tons.

Harbour facilities were primitive. No quays or warehouses existed. Where sheltered channels were found the trading craft were brought up them in order to simplify loading and unloading. But in tidal harbours, or in the mouths of tidal rivers, the vessels were either moored in deep water and the cargo discharged by means of small boats or lighters, or else beached upon the bank as the tide ebbed.

One piece of evidence extant throws a remarkable light on the influence that sea trade had acquired even in the far-off days before the Norman Conquest. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, after narrating the death of Canute, goes on to say, "Soon after his decease there was a council of all the nobles at Oxford, where Earl Leofric and almost all the thanes north of the Thames, and the naval men in London, chose Harold, son of Canute, to

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be governor of England." That "naval men," in other words, sea-traders, should sit at the same council board as nobles, thanes, and ecclesiastics, marks a great step forward in the recognition of the national importance of our growing Mercantile Marine.

The early effects of strong Norman rule on the Mercantile Marine were exemplified by the establishment of the Cinque Ports. These consisted at first of Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover, and Sandwich, but later on Winchelsea, Rye and other ports were added to the list. These towns, in return for considerable privileges, engaged to place fifty-seven ships at the service of the Crown for fifteen days at their own expense, after which time they were to receive the customary rates of charter.

But the overweening warlike ambitions of the Angevin Kings and their ignorance of the national importance of commerce soon struck many shrewd blows at the Mercantile Marine. Not only were heavy imposts laid on goods landed on our shores and on the seaports themselves, but constant restrictions were placed on the free interchange of commodities. And as imposts and restrictions varied with the whims of successive



monarchs, commerce waned. The greatest impediment to sea trading, however, came from the host of pirates, who during the 13th century almost annihilated the small foreign trade and did enormous damage to coastal shipping.

As a consequence, in Henry III.'s reign the price of pepper rose from 6*d.* to 3*s.* a lb., and Alexander III. of Scotland, with native caution, absolutely prohibited the export of Scottish merchandise in any other than foreign bottoms. Again it is stated that when Ludgate Debtors' Prison was established in the reign of Richard II., the greater number of the inmates were merchant traders who had been brought to penury by the depredations of pirates.

At this time almost the whole of the Mercantile Marine was coastal. Rarely, if ever, were the vessels out of sight of land for more than a few hours at a time, and boats which were seaworthy enough to carry goods from London to Dunbar, were equally capable of sailing to the ports of France, the Low Countries, Spain, Portugal, and the Baltic. During the reign of Henry III. the first quay was built at Queenhithe for the discharge of vessels of the Cinque Ports.

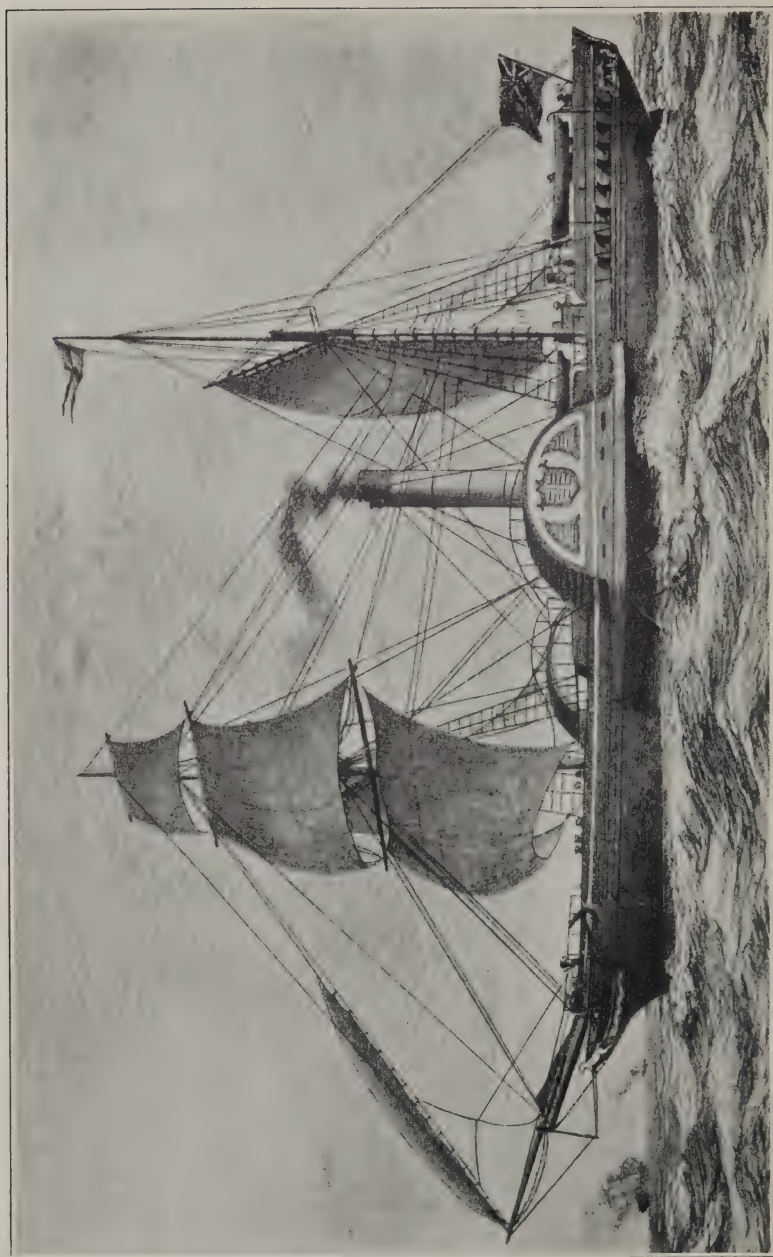
The export of wool to the Low Countries was

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of vast importance, and the first London Bridge of stone, erected in 1209, was said to have been "built upon woolpacks," because the cost was defrayed by an impost on wool. Another most important article of trade was sea coal from the Tyne, of which immense quantities were poured into London, each cargo paying a toll of 6*d.* as it passed London Bridge. In those days the Fleet River, now a sewer, was navigable up to Holborn, and Sea Coal Lane, off Farringdon Street, retains since 1253 a name recalling our early coastal trading.

An important date in the history of our Mercantile Marine is that of 1290, for then for the first time the carrying trade is mentioned, when a ship with a crew of six men was hired to carry a mixed cargo of wine, cider, wheat, and oats from the Thames to Berwick for 99*s.* for the trip. Another noteworthy item has come down to us under the date 1315 and gives us some particulars of the *Little Edward*, a trading vessel of that period. She was owned and commanded by John Brand, a citizen and merchant of London, and, laden with a cargo of 120 half-sacks of wool, valued at £1,200, sailed from London to Antwerp on behalf of three Hanse merchants. A little





Paddle Steamer *Sirius*, 412 tons. Built in 1837, for the Cork Steamship Company.  
The first Passenger Steamer to cross the Atlantic from the United Kingdom.



later we hear of Spanish and Portuguese merchants regularly hiring British ships to carry their goods to Flanders.

Even the Sovereign in those days did not disdain the profits that were to be gleaned from the carrying trade, for in 1423 Henry V. hired his ship, *The Holgost*, to some Lombard merchants for a voyage to Zeeland and back for twenty pounds, roughly equivalent to 8s. per ton for two months.

It is interesting to note the names of the chief ports of England during the reign of Edward I. They were: Dover, Sandwich, Romney, Winchelsea, Rye, Hythe, Faversham, Hastings, Shoreham, Seaford, Portsmouth, Southampton, Dartmouth, Lymington, Weymouth, Poole, Humble, Lymme, Sidmouth, Chichester, Teignmouth, Frome, Fowey, Looe, Bodmin, Wareham, Falmouth, Bristol, Haverford West, Carnarvon, Caermarthen, Llandfradanour, Conway, Chester, Bridgewater, Cardiff, Oystermouth, Rochester, Gravesend, Northfleet, London, Harwich, Ipswich, Dunwich, Orford, Yarmouth, Blackney, Lynn, Boston, Wainfleet, Saltfleet, Grimsby, Hull, Ravensbury, Scarborough, Tynemouth, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Dunbar, White-

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haven, Carlisle, Lancaster, Burry Port, Hayle, Padstow, and Milford Haven.

Unhappily, no record exists of the amount of trade done by the foregoing. The only document extant dealing with such matters is a return which states that in the year ending November 20, 1299, there arrived in the port of London and in all the other ports of the kingdom, including the Cinque Ports, seventy-three vessels with cargoes of wine, of which the smallest had not less than nineteen tons on board.

A curious sidelight is thrown on the relative importance of certain ports by the quota that some had to furnish in the shipping that was required for the Siege of Calais in 1346. Fowey had to furnish more vessels than London, and Winchelsea more than Dover. From York came one small vessel, while the great importance of the coal trade may be judged from the fact that Newcastle had to furnish no fewer than seventeen ships.

The Hundred Years' War added another to the many grievous burdens under which the Mercantile Marine was labouring. It is interesting to note that the charter rate for war purposes in 1380 was 3*s.* 4*d.* per ton for

three months, but that in 1385 it had fallen to 2s. per ton.

Richard II. showed some interest in our carrying trade when in 1382 he enacted that British subjects should export and import goods in English ships only, with the majority of the crew English subjects. This was the earliest of our Navigation Acts, but there was no serious attempt made to enforce it, and it soon became more or less a dead letter.

In connection with the organised piracy of which we have spoken above, it is rather amusing to read of the conference held between English and Hanseatic merchants at the beginning of the reign of Henry IV., whereby mutual compensation was to be paid for piratic attacks on each other's commerce. Then it was discovered that while England had to pay 32,326 nobles, her merchants had to receive only 766 nobles—an eloquent tribute to the marauding enterprise of our ancestors.

The end of the Hundred Years' War came at last, and with it a breath of freedom for trade. By now, the size of vessels had grown considerably and the galleon type, depending chiefly on sails, had displaced the galley.

In 1485 the shipping trade extended to the Mediterranean, and a great step forward was taken when Lorenzo Strozzi was appointed to settle at Pisa to look after the interests of our commerce. This man was the first English Consul. From now on, the coastwise trade and the overseas trade of England may be said to have diverged, and the business of the shipowner for the first time became distinct from that of the merchant. Again the year 1488 marked the beginnings of the Royal Navy, when the keel of the *Great Harry* was laid in Woolwich. Though for nearly two hundred years later merchant shipping was liable to be called on for war services, and indeed played an important part in our sea fights, yet the tendency henceforth was to rely more and more in warfare on ships specially built for the purpose. This was of vast benefit to the Mercantile Marine, which needed the utmost freedom in order to take its share in the great extension of seafaring that followed the discoveries of Vasco da Gama, Columbus, and other explorers in both hemispheres.

In spite of the great growth in the British Mercantile Marine, the size of the ships, strange to say, seemed for many hundreds of years to have



made little or no increase. So early as the reign of Edward III. a vessel of 300 tons was recorded. In the English fleet that fought the Armada in 1588 no merchant vessel exceeded 300-400 tons. One reason for the comparative restrictions in size was the lack of facilities for building vessels of large dimensions. Another was that the port in the modern sense had not been evolved, and in consequence the loading and unloading of large vessels presented great difficulties.

The reign of Henry VII., marked as it was by a comparative freedom from war, saw considerable progress in the Mercantile Marine. In 1488 an Act was passed forbidding claret to be brought into England except in English, Irish, or Welsh ships. In 1489 it was enacted that wines and timber were to come into England only in English ships manned by English sailors.

Henry VIII.'s religious and matrimonial adventures averted his eyes from sea trade, but in the reign of Edward VI., in accordance with the inchoate theories of the time, the law of 1489 was cancelled.

An important date in this period is 1555, when the Russian Company was formed, the first of those great trading associations on whose enter-

prise the British Empire was largely built up. The greatest expansion of the Mercantile Marine came, however, with "the spacious days of Great Elizabeth." During this reign no fewer than four great companies were added to the Russian. They were the Turkey, the African, the Virginian, and the East Indian.

The first great constructive measure came in 1562 in an Act to encourage sea-fishing. By this not only were fishing-vessels freed from taxation, but each Wednesday was appointed to be a fish day. The effect was to give a much-needed stimulus to the fishing and coastal trade generally, so that, when in 1588 the country's resources had to be mobilised to stave off the Spanish menace, the Mercantile Marine proved fully equal to the task of defeating the Armada.

Another Act forced every vessel above 20 tons coming to English ports to contribute 3*d.* per ton per voyage, and as in addition there was an impost of 1½*d.* per chaldron of coal, a purely native product, the coastwise traffic received no undue consideration. Almost the last Act of this reign is one concerning "matters of assurance among merchants," and is of the first importance in connection with sea trading. In this reference

is made to the system then in vogue of insuring goods, and a Commission is appointed to decide differences which may arise from time to time.

During the Protectorate there came into operation the Navigation Acts whereby English merchants were forbidden to carry goods in any but English ships. This served to rehabilitate our sea trade, and Charles II. continued the good work by several useful enactments. In 1660 an Act was passed for the encouragement and increase of shipping, wherein it was stipulated that no goods should be imported from the Colonial plantations except in English ships, and that aliens were not to be merchants or factors in the plantations. Goods of foreign origin were to come direct from the place of growth in English ships. Coastwise goods could not be carried in any vessel owned by an alien unless he was naturalised. Another Act strengthened the powers of the tribunal appointed under the Act of Elizabeth to deal with insurance matters. These, with various Acts to encourage the Baltic trade and the Greenland whale fisheries, and to establish the Hudson Bay Company, attest the interest that the "Merry Monarch" and his advisers showed in the Mercantile Marine.

A tremendous set-back to trade came in 1665 and 1666 with the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London, and the Dutch War which followed further hampered the Mercantile Marine in its efforts towards recovery.

The beginning of the 18th century saw the completion of the Great Howland Wet Dock on the Thames, which was noteworthy in that it possessed "a mast crane for taking out and setting in masts in ships in the wet dock which answers the end of an hulk with proper juts and crab for careening three or four ships at once." Masting a ship was then a dangerous task, and one hundred years later, when the Brunswick Dock, Blackwall, was equipped with a crane suspended from a lofty tower overhanging the ship that was to be masted, a great advance had been made.

1708 marks the beginning of a new era in British maritime history, for the citizens of Liverpool, whose trade had developed enormously during the 17th century, secured an Act of Parliament in this year for the construction of a Dock—the first of its kind the world had seen. When the dock was opened in 1715 it enabled vessels to discharge their cargoes and to





S.S. *Patriotic*, 2254 tons. Belfast Steam-Ship Co., Ltd. Liverpool-Belfast Nightly Express Passenger Service.



reload without any of the delays due to tidal and weather conditions, which had hitherto occurred. It increased the earning power of ships considerably and led to the building of bigger ships. The financial gains resulting from the construction of the first dock led to the universal adoption of the system.

From now on the Mercantile Marine was allowed to develop with little or no interference from King or Parliament. Statistics with regard to shipping in these days only rarely come to light, but it is an important fact that in 1728 out of a total 8,886 ships that arrived in London, 6,837, or 77 per cent. of the whole, were coasters.

Between 1750 and 1795 coastwise shipping made enormous strides, the number of vessels rising from 6,396 to 11,964, an increase of 87 per cent., and the tonnage from 512,000 to 1,176,000, an increase of 130 per cent.

The Pool of London at this time was constantly crowded with vessels, both foreign and coastal, and owing to a lack of system in the mooring arrangements tremendous congestion arose. A noteworthy result was that owing to the difficulty of mooring the colliers that choked the river in 1794, the price of coal rose to £6 9s. 0d.

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a chaldron. One of the consequences was a realisation that the Thames was no longer adequate for the vast development of the trade that it harboured, and this led to the building of the great West India and East India Docks.



### CHAPTER III

ONE of the noteworthy geographical features of the British Islands is the great number of natural harbours of various kinds that are to be found on its long and deeply indented coastline. In addition, in proportion to its size, the country possesses an immense number of tidal rivers that provide sheltered anchorage for large vessels.

In the early days of our Mercantile Marine any sheltered inlet and almost every river sufficed to harbour the small vessels of the period. But as ships grew larger in size, and as, moreover, in order to attain greater speed they began to abandon the flat-bottomed type of craft that were earliest in vogue, improvements had to be made in the harbours, and crude efforts at dredging and building embankments were made. But inevitably the ships sought out the better ports in each area and the inferior ones sank into unimportance and decay. Again, natural causes often operated to bring important ports into desuetude.

The most noted example of this is probably

the famous Cinque Ports, which at one period rivalled London itself in importance. Not only did they serve an area which was then the most densely populated and the most prosperous in the country, but they were in close proximity to those parts of the Continent with which almost all our external trade was done. Yet after a few hundred years of renown their importance dwindled to nothingness, and nowadays, of the original imposing list, not one survives as a port at all. Later additions, such as Dover and Folkestone, still flourish as outports of London in the Cross-Channel trade.

Numerous causes have operated to produce a fluctuation in the importance of our seaports. Of these the greatest is the industrial revolution of the second half of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. Hitherto Great Britain had been in the main an agricultural and pastoral country. At the beginning of the 18th century, roughly four-fifths of the population were engaged on the land, and even as late as 1763 sufficient corn was grown at home to supply the wants of the people. But in 1740 came the substitution of pit coal for wood in the smelting of iron ore. In 1759 James Watt trans-

formed the steam engine from a crude toy into an epoch-making producer of industrial energy. And from 1761 onwards the inventions of the flyshuttle, the spinning-jenny, the spinning-frame, and the card loom, enabled machinery largely to take the place of hand labour in the textile industries, enormously increased output, and established us as a manufacturing and exporting nation.

In consequence, new industries sprang up all over the country, but chiefly in proximity to the coalfields, and there began that steady migration townwards of the agricultural population that has continued to this day. Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire, Lanarkshire, the Black Country, South Wales, and other areas, became hives of industry, sheltering vast communities of workers, and soon in wealth and population they hopelessly outrivalled the more fertile areas of Southern and Eastern Britain. Trade necessarily flowed along new channels, and new ports came into being to serve its needs.

Again, the development of overseas trade, especially that with the Western Hemisphere, led to the aggrandisement of certain ports whose geographical position was most convenient. Thus Bristol rose into importance with the West Indian

trade, and Liverpool with that of North America. But whereas the former was situated in an area that was chiefly agricultural, the latter was the outlet for a host of manufacturing industries, and therefore, could provide return cargoes for the ships that brought the foodstuffs and raw materials to its docks. Hence, surely and rapidly Liverpool outdistanced its less fortunate competitor.

Finally the growth in the size of ships rendered obsolete a number of ports that had been well capable of harbouring the two-hundred tonners that were the "big ships" of the 17th century.

Even the course of one hundred years has been sufficient to show a considerable difference in the relative importance of our chief ports. In 1828, for example, the order of importance was as follows: London, Newcastle, Liverpool, Sunderland, Hull, Whitehaven and Whitby. It is interesting to note that the last of these boasted then of a fleet of 480 vessels with a gross tonnage of 46,086 tons.

It will be noted that of our great ports of to-day almost all are river ports which, with the exception of Liverpool, have been canalised in



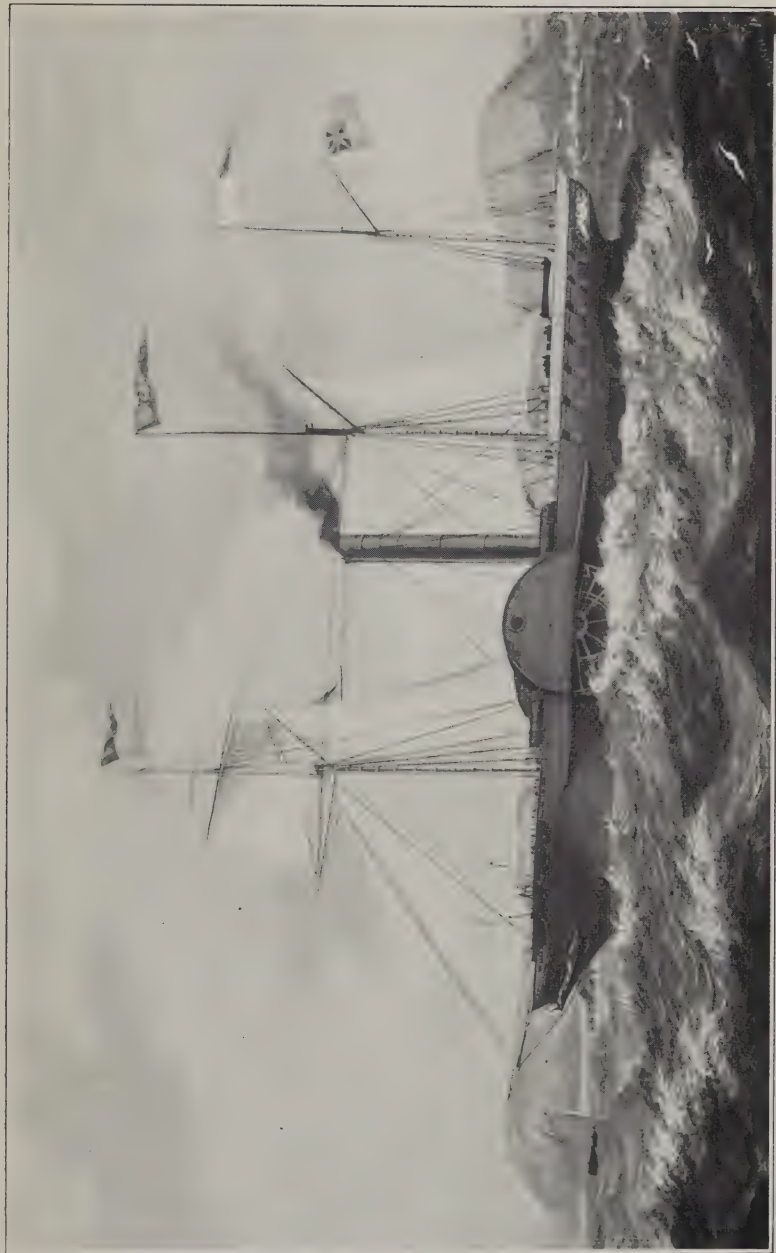
order to enable them to deal economically and effectively with modern ships. Of these from the point of view of natural advantages, London is undoubtedly now as ever, first and foremost. In its early days its importance as the capital of England, its position in the centre of the most fertile area, and its proximity to the Continent would have ensured its greatness. But, most of all, it owes its high destiny to its navigable tidal stream, which in the era of sailing ships carried merchant vessels up and down with the certainty of a tug-boat. Even now, with its vastly increased importance as capital of the British Empire, it is upon its splendid river, with a population of eight million people on its doorstep to "fetch and carry for," that the Metropolis most largely depends to maintain its pride of place.

Yet this result has not been attained without great and continuous effort. Even so far back as the 13th century, and possibly earlier, the inhabitants of London had undertaken and largely carried through, the gigantic task of building 100 miles of earthworks on the banks of the Thames, thereby making it suitable for navigation. Hitherto the river had been broad and sluggish, and consisting at low water of merely a thin stream.

Even at high tide the waters spread out slowly, and shoals and sandbanks must have made navigation extremely difficult. Again, the lack of a swift current resulted in large quantities of mud being deposited on the bed of the river, and thereby rendering it more and more shallow.

Strange to say, there is no record in existence as to when or by whom the great work of the embankments was carried out. Some even surmise that it goes back to the days of the Romans, who were justly renowned for their wonderful engineering. Constant dredging was needed throughout the centuries to prevent the silting up of the river. Quays, too, from as far back as the 12th century, were provided in order to facilitate the handling of merchandise.

The opening of the 19th century saw the inauguration of the great system of London docks which added so enormously to the facilities of the Port. Finally, the conflicting interests of various companies and individuals connected with the mighty volume of shipping that flowed into the river, and which seriously hampered the progress of the Port, were in the main adjusted, and the constitution of the Port of London Authority by



Paddle Steamer *Eagle*. Built in 1835 for Messrs. G. & J. Burns, of Glasgow.





Act of Parliament in 1908, gave London the opportunity it needed of adapting itself to the needs of modern shipping.

Liverpool, the second of our Ports, is comparatively a new-comer. In the 16th century it was almost unknown, while Chester had been renowned since Roman days. But once Liverpool had taken its first strides on the road to greatness, the rapidity of its growth has scarcely a parallel in the Eastern Hemisphere. Liverpool's earliest developments as a port are attributed by some to the disastrous years of the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London, which, coupled with the piracy that accompanied the Dutch Wars of that period, drove many merchants away from London to settle on the banks of the Mersey. However, Liverpool's great opportunity arrived with the springing up of the cotton industry in its immediate hinterland, and the development of the West Indies and North America. Later the discovery of the Lancashire coalfield gave rise to a great number of other industries for which Liverpool became inevitably the outlet. Splendidly placed, as it is, on a broad and navigable estuary, facing Ireland and the Western Hemisphere, with a wealth of inland waterways and a splendid railway

service connecting it with the great centres of the cotton, woollen, pottery and other industries, and in close proximity to an industrial population of over ten millions, two centuries have seen it rise to its present position of pre-eminence among the ports of the world.

Liverpool, like most of our other river ports, found it hard to adapt itself to accommodating the rapid development of its trade. The Mersey is shallow, and a bar across the mouth has at all times been a great hindrance to navigation. The difficulties experienced in the discharge and loading of cargoes on the banks of an estuary swept twice daily by a powerful tidal current led, as we have seen, to the construction of the first British dock, the vanguard of the wonderful series of docks by which Liverpool has risen to its present pinnacle of greatness. As time went on, and bigger and bigger vessels came thronging to the port, greater and greater efforts became necessary in order to provide a sufficient depth of water. Thus in 1890 the minimum depth of water at the Mersey Bar was but 11 feet. (It has since been increased to 27 feet.)

The most remarkable example, however, of human energy lifting a river port from insig-

nificance to greatness, is seen in the rise of Glasgow.

The Clyde is normally a puny stream. Within comparatively recent times its depth at low water at Glasgow was estimated in inches and only vessels of the shallowest draught could find anchorage there. When, however, the industrial development of the Lanarkshire coalfield and the rapidly growing trade with North America created a demand for a large port on the south-west coast of Scotland, it was resolved to create this at Glasgow. As a result, by 1830 the Clyde was narrowed, deepened, and dredged until 20 feet of water was available for ships. Also quays were built and warehouses provided. Later, the extraordinary development of ship-building along the river led to constant improvement in the latter's facilities until to-day Glasgow is in the front rank of world ports.

The remarkable vicissitudes that ports undergo from time to time can be vividly illustrated in the case of Southampton, another river port. Southampton in the early days of our history was of considerable importance. But with the coming of the industrial revolution it fell back. It had no industrial or densely populated hinterland, and it

was distant from coal. Hence it appeared as though destined to share the fate of Bruges.

Yet Southampton possessed two outstanding advantages that later on were to outweigh its disabilities. One was its magnificent natural harbour which enjoyed the inestimable advantage of four tides a day. The other was its splendid position on the south coast on the direct line between the Continent and North America. Its chance came with the extraordinary development in size of the modern liner. Port authorities failed to visualise the possibility that vessels of even 25,000 tons would ever be a commercial proposition, and one of 50,000 tons would have seemed a nightmare. Hence they budgeted, so to speak, for vessels that ranged more or less within their vision, and the coming of the great Cunarders and White Star boats of the 20th century found only two ports able to provide the depth of water or docking facilities necessary for these monsters.

Liverpool and Southampton, however, had the depth of water required, and with furious energy they adapted themselves to the new type of vessel. But the struggle among steamship companies, British and Continental, for the lion's share of the



passenger traffic struck a blow at Liverpool's predominance. A vast stream of emigrants was flowing from the Continent to the United States, and Liverpool was comparatively remote from the Continental ports. Thus the travellers from the mainland who chose to travel by a Liverpool boat could not enjoy the facilities of a continuous sea passage, and had to disembark at Newcastle, Hull, Grimsby, or some southern port, and take a wearisome railway journey across England before their final embarkation.

Again, a highly important branch of the passenger traffic is that of conveying between America and Europe the host of American excursionists that make the latter continent their holiday playground. Now Paris is the Mecca of all Americans, and the "Gay City" is almost invariably their destination. This placed Liverpool at a disadvantage, as it was off the shortest route between New York or Boston and the French ports. Southampton, being close to the Continent, gained what Liverpool lost, and, as a consequence, has become one of the greatest passenger ports in the world, whilst as an outport of London, it has secured a considerable amount of goods traffic as well. It is an amazing proof of Liverpool's

greatness as a port that although the giant liners no longer swell its annual returns, and that a large section of emigrant traffic has been transferred to Southampton, the Mersey city still holds pride of place as the greatest passenger port in the world.

It is interesting to note that our great ports vary considerably in their methods of dealing with cargo. In London, for example, at least three-fourths of the cargo that arrives goes into barges for conveyance to riverside wharves or warehouses, or to the waterside depôts of the various railway companies. On the other hand, in Liverpool only an insignificant number of barges is employed for this purpose. The goods are unloaded into railway wagons or on to the quay, and thence carted to warehouse or railway goods station. Hull follows London in this, whilst Glasgow follows Liverpool.

Again, Liverpool and Hull adhere to the principle of closed docks. That is to say, nearly every ship has to enter or leave the dock at the two brief periods in each day when tidal conditions permit the opening of the dock-gates, and few riverside wharves are employed. In the case of Glasgow and Southampton the system of tidal basins and open quays is in vogue.

## CHAPTER IV

IN view of our age-long association with the sea and all that pertains thereto, it is remarkable and even disconcerting to discover that, outside of shipping circles, the people of this country have but a feeble conception of the vast importance of our Mercantile Marine. The overwhelming majority of Britons are interested mainly in the crack passenger lines whose luxurious amenities are the constant theme of newspaper paragraphs, whilst the mighty fleet of trading vessels that carries on the business of the nation receives scant attention. More especially is this the case with the Coastwise Section, the Cinderella of sea transport. Yet the services rendered by the latter are of the first importance in the economic life of the nation.

Nothing better illustrates the energy and adaptability that characterises our coastal Mercantile Marine than the readiness it showed a century ago in adopting steam propulsion.

In 1812 the *Comet* inaugurated a passenger service in the Clyde. In 1815 came an extension of the service from Dunoon to Inverary, and by 1822 Fortwilliam, Tobermory, and Skye were all served by the Glasgow steam-packet *Highlander*.

In 1814 the *Britannia* and later the *Waterloo* opened communication between Glasgow and Greenock, Gourock, Rothesay, Tarbert, Lochgilphead, and Inverary. In 1820 the former vessel made trips to the Giant's Causeway, and after a couple of years, was placed on a regular service between Glasgow and Londonderry, travelling once a week from each port,

In 1819 the *Robert Burns* began a service between Greenock and Liverpool. She called at Fortpatrick and Douglas (Isle of Man) *en route*, and covered the journey to Liverpool in thirty hours. Other steamers were added to the service, and in January, 1828, the owners were encouraged to start a new service between Glasgow, Greenock, and Belfast, with a new steamer, *Frolic*. An important feature of the latter was that she carried cargo as well as passengers, and was therefore one of the earliest coastwise trading ships.





S.S. *Meteor*, 1269 tons. Built in 1887. London and Edinburgh Shipping Co., Ltd.



In this, however, she had been anticipated by the owners of the *Frugal*, which opened a direct service between Glasgow and Belfast in 1826. The *Frugal* was 116 feet long, 21 feet 6 inches wide, and 12 feet 4 inches deep, with two engines of 50 h.p. each. She could accommodate thirty passengers with sleeping berths, had several horse-boxes on deck, and carried 180 tons of cargo. The rates for passage were, in the cabin 20s. and on deck 3s., and the days of sailing from Glasgow, Tuesdays and Fridays.

At an early stage in the history of steam navigation communication was opened between England and Ireland. In 1816 the steam-packet *Hibernia* was built to carry passengers between Howth (Dublin Bay) and Holyhead. This was followed by the steam-packets *Waterloo* and *Belfast*, which sailed with passengers only every alternate day between Liverpool and Dublin. In 1821 another company launched two of the largest and most powerful packets that had yet been built, the *St. Patrick* and the *St. George*, and placed them on the same service.

Another important cross-Channel service was established in 1822 between Liverpool and

Cork by the St. George Steam-packet Company, which later became the Cork Steamship Company.

In spite of many rivals, and notwithstanding the fact that a large fleet of sailing vessels already carried cargo between the two ports, the City of Dublin Steam-packet Company launched in 1823 the *City of Dublin*, a vessel of 130 h.p., the forerunner of a famous fleet. This vessel not only carried general cargo in addition to live stock and passengers, but she also maintained the service uninterruptedly throughout the twelve months.

Great success attended the company's operations, and in 1826 they possessed a large fleet of over a dozen new and powerful steamers, so that, in spite of tremendous opposition, including that which they suffered when the Government established a mail service between Liverpool and Kingstown, they continued to expand, adding services to Drogheda, Belfast, and Londonderry to their programme.

Liverpool and Belfast had opened up steamship communication as early as 1819, but it was not till 1824 that the *Shamrock* began a regular service between these ports, with goods as well

as passengers. Four years later two rival companies, Messrs. Langtry and the City of Dublin, began a fierce war, in which passage rates were so cut that the steerage fare between Liverpool and Belfast was reduced to threepence, and the lucky voyager was also entitled to a liberal supply of bread and cheese. An amicable arrangement, however, settled the dispute, to the disgust, no doubt, of the pampered steerage passenger.

In 1826 a regular steam-packet service was established between London and Dublin, when two steamers, the *Thames* and the *Shannon*, began to trade on the route. A third vessel, the *City of Londonderry*, was soon added, and these steamers, each 513 tons burden and 160 h.p., were able to cover the journey between the two ports in eighty hours.

The Isle of Man lacked direct regular communication with the mainland until 1828, when the St. George Company obtained a contract to carry the mails between Liverpool and Douglas. But the results were so unsatisfactory to Manxmen that the Mona's Isle Company was formed in opposition in 1830, and the rivalry between the companies soon led to a greatly improved service.

Leith, Whitehaven, Dumfries, Dundalk,



Bristol, and a large number of other ports were now included in the regular itinerary of various steamship companies, and by 1840 coastwise trading by the new form of propulsion had attained considerable importance.

As early as 1820 a correspondent of the *Liverpool Mercury* suggested the use of iron ventilators to supply fresh air to holds of steamers carrying cattle across the Channel.

This is ample evidence of the recognition of the possibilities of coastwise traffic that the new invention aroused. Only eight years had elapsed since the crude *Comet* had been launched at Glasgow, yet steamships for trading purposes were already in being.

From this time on coastwise traffic developed at a rapid rate, more particularly in connecting Ireland with Great Britain, and as trade expanded and new industrial areas were opened up, an adequate supply of coasting vessels was always at hand to provide the necessary transport.

As we show elsewhere, of late years many unnatural disabilities have brought a check on the progress of the coastal marine, yet its importance to-day may be gauged from the fact that during the year 1924 the tonnage of coastwise

shipping in and out of the Port of London alone amounted to no less than 7,843,261 tons.

Again in 1923 the arrivals and departures of coastwise vessels at ports in the United Kingdom were :

				Tons
Arrivals	...	....	....	21,407,418
Departures		....	....	21,520,882

In this trade over 1,000 vessels are regularly engaged, with a total deadweight greatly exceeding half a million tons, the individual vessels ranging in character and size from the fifty-tons sailing barge to miniature ocean liners of two or three thousand tons.

The functions of coastal shipping are briefly as follows :

- (1) To distribute coal (60 per cent. of the commodities carried coastwise consists of coal).
- (2) To carry raw material from its source to the nearest manufacturing area.
- (3) To carry manufactured goods and food-stuffs, including fish, from the producing to the consuming areas.
- (4) To distribute colonial and foreign produce from the Ocean Ports among the lesser ports.

- (5) To convey manufactured goods, destined for overseas markets, from the producing areas to the Ocean Ports.
- (6) To convey from one area to another bulky merchandise, part or wholly manufactured, the value of which is small in proportion to its volume.
- (7) To carry passengers.

It will probably surprise many to learn that there are no fewer than 250 established and regular coastwise services between the ports of Great Britain and Ireland, apart from the vast number of voyages made by tramping steamers and those resulting from special charters.

Year in, year out, in fair weather or foul, by day and by night these vessels are cheerfully fetching and carrying for all that employ them. Steaming out of Ayrshire or Cumberland ports with coal for Ireland; bearing the china clay of Cornwall from Fowey and Poole to ports adjacent to the Potteries; collecting the slate of North Wales at Carnarvon or Conway and discharging it at Liverpool, London, and other great residential city-ports; gathering vast supplies of cured herrings on the East Coast of Scotland at Aberdeen and Dundee and distributing them along the

English seaboard; loading up at Liverpool, London, or Glasgow with the wheat, flour, rice, sugar, mineral oil, oilcake, fertiliser, and other commodities that great tramp steamers have brought thither from overseas, and discharging at a host of lesser ports along the coast; transporting the steel billets and rails of Middlesbrough and Barrow, the agricultural machinery of Norwich, and the tinplates of Swansea to ports in proximity to the area of demand; bringing the cattle, pigs, horses, bacon, and eggs of agricultural Ireland to the great markets of Britain and bearing thence in exchange a host of manufactured and entrepôt goods.

Lastly, there are the highly organised steamship services conveying both passengers and cargo between London and Scotland, London and Liverpool, London and Newcastle-on-Tyne. Between Great Britain and Ireland there are thirty-eight cross-channel services, mostly maintained by passenger-carrying vessels. Like those engaged in the purely English and Scottish services, these vessels are renowned for speed, comfort, and luxury, being Atlantic liners in miniature. In most instances they are operated on regular schedules and connect with the main-line railway expresses in each country.



## CHAPTER V

DURING the first six decades of the 19th century the people of Britain had witnessed, amongst other marvels, the application of steam power to industrial processes, to the propulsion of ships and to land transport in the shape of the locomotive, most of the principal centres of population having been linked by the iron road.

Having traced the development of Britain's shipping from its earliest beginnings, through the Dark Ages and during the later days when man's knowledge of the elements had increased sufficiently to enable him to become their ruler, we may now take stock of the position of our Mercantile Marine some fifty years after the adoption of the marine engine. In the five years 1860-1864 our Foreign Commerce was carried by ships representing 13,040,000 tons net of entrances, whilst the entrances in the Coasting Trade of



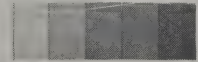


**REFERENCE**  
**Density of Population**  
**to the square mile.**

According to Census of Scotland 1911. Based on 1911 figures.  
 According to Census of 1911 for Ireland.

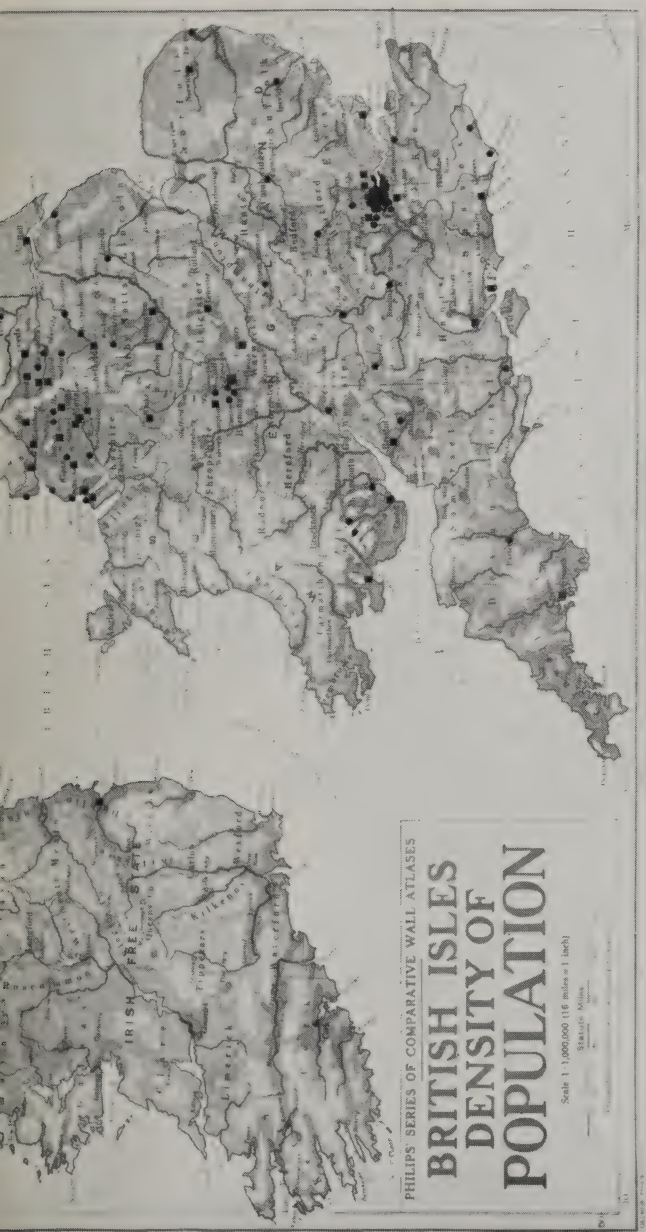
**Under 16 inhabitants**

- 16 - 32** "
- 32 - 64** "
- 64 - 128** "
- 128 - 256** "
- 256 - 512** "
- Over 512** "



- Towns with 50-100,000 inh.
- " " 100-500,000 "
- " " over 500,000 "





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Great Britain represented 11,790,000 tons net. That is, in the years 1860-1864 the coasting trade entrances were only 10 per cent. less than the foreign trade entrances. Moreover it can be shown that the practical equality between our overseas and coastal shipping had proved of the utmost value in promoting the country's prosperity.

The events of the latter part of the "wonderful century," and the earlier years of the 20th, are too well known to need recapitulation. There is, however, one salient fact to which attention may be drawn, viz. the enormous increase in the population of these Islands which took place between 1863 and 1913. During those fifty years the population had practically doubled, and, as will be seen from the map which faces page 48, the greater portion of the increased population had located itself upon the seaboard. Practically one-half of the entire population now reside in or within fifteen miles of a port. No manufacturing district is more remote from the seaboard than a distance of fifty miles, and even these are effectively served by waterways leading from ports. One half of the population of the non-industrial areas are scattered over the less

densely populated parts of the country, the majority being engaged in agricultural and allied pursuits, and being less dependent upon commerce than any other section of the community.

Coincidentally with the doubling of the population, the nation's productivity had increased in much greater proportion, with a consequent increase in the volume of exports, a rise in the standard of living, and a corresponding increase in the demand for overseas supplies in the shape of food and raw materials. In earlier chapters attention has been drawn to the fact that throughout many centuries prior to the introduction of the marine steam-engine, there was little increase in the size of the vessels, and that even when the Ocean and Coastwise sections of our Mercantile Marine became clearly distinguishable, the ships of each section were easily accommodated in the same ports.

The successful application of steam to ship propulsion resulted in a swift and progressive increase in the size of ships which only reached its zenith immediately prior to 1914. In the previous half-century the average net tonnage of the British steamships employed in the ocean overseas trades had practically doubled, and the

increase had been especially marked from 1890 onwards. The reason for these increases in size was the discovery that, up to a certain point, the bigger the ship the greater its profit-earning capacity became. Shipowners promptly began to exploit that discovery.

But big ships demand bigger and better ports, with adequate port equipment and facilities, and these were more difficult to obtain. The capital expenditure required for the development of a port was greater—its financial reward much less, and whilst ships were built, owned and run by private enterprise for private profits, our ports were mainly owned and controlled by public authorities on a non-profit-making basis. They naturally preferred to lag behind the demand for facilities rather than to run the risk of annual deficits by intelligent anticipation of that demand. Railway-owned ports provide the only example of the opposite course being adopted, but they have been run for private profit. It naturally followed that coincidentally with the increase in the size of ships there was a decrease in the number of ports engaged in the overseas trade.

In view of these facts it might naturally be assumed that side by side with the development

of ocean shipping, which during the period under review had increased fivefold, there would have been a corresponding increase in the coastal section of the Mercantile Marine. It is, however, a lamentable fact that, so far from this being the case, whilst tonnage entrances of ocean shipping had increased fivefold the tonnage entrances of the shipping engaged in the coastwise section had only doubled.

In the five years 1910-1914, our foreign commerce was carried by ships representing 73,050,000 tons net of entrances, whilst the entrances in the coasting trade of Great Britain represented 21,870,000 tons net, *i.e.* coasting entrances represented only 30 per cent. on the foreign entrances.

In describing as a lamentable fact the nation's failure to increase the coastal section of its Mercantile Marine in the same ratio as ocean shipping had increased, our judgment is based upon national considerations alone. As for the causes which are responsible for the present state of our coastwise shipping more will have to be said.

The casual reader may observe to himself at this point that apparently the diminished pro-



portion of coastwise to ocean shipping had not prevented this country from reaching a high degree of prosperity at the beginning of the 20th century. None who are genuinely concerned for the national well-being will permit themselves to be misled into the acceptance and toleration of conditions inimical to the national welfare by a show of prosperity which, being based upon insecure foundations, is in reality false and impermanent.

These considerations adequately justify the determination to demonstrate that the failure to maintain our coastwise shipping at the same relative strength to the ocean shipping which it held in the period 1860–1864 has been a source of national weakness; that it is imperatively necessary in the national interest that every effort should be made by the Government of this country, by the Port Authorities, by shipping companies, manufacturers, merchants, and all who are engaged in domestic or foreign commerce, to secure once again the utilisation of coastal shipping as the most economic form of transport between the great centres of population in proximity to the coast.

Britain is absolutely dependent for its existence



on its overseas commerce, that is, upon its ability to exchange its manufactured goods and its coal for food and raw material. Every factor in the national organisation of our commerce which tends to reduce the prime cost of Britain's exports enhances the demand for our products and correspondingly increases the supplies of food and raw materials which are essential to the production of the exports with which we pay for further supplies of food and raw materials. The cost of that food and raw material at the point of consumption determines in part the price which we must demand for our products. The lower the price of food and raw material the lower the price will be at which we can afford to sell our products to other nations. It is an axiom that a reduction in price leads to an increase in demand. It necessarily follows that in the national interest the transport of commodities should not only be most efficiently conducted but that the most economic form of transport should be employed.

Having regard to the distribution of population and industry to which we have already referred, it is obvious that, sea transport being far cheaper than land transport, it must be in the national

interest that this particular method of conveying commodities should be utilised to the fullest possible extent. If, in addition, it can be shown that by this means the carrying power of our ocean shipping can be substantially increased, it will be difficult to justify the maintenance of the prevalent artificial conditions which tend to undermine the national prosperity.

The principal factor which determines the cost of food and raw material at the point of consumption in this country is the volume of supplies. In normal times that volume is chiefly determined by the tonnage of shipping engaged in the overseas carrying trade; by the ability of our principal ports to unload and load the vessels so engaged, and by the adequacy of their arrangements for efficient and economic transport of the supplies received to the point of consumption.

Only in a minor degree does the cost of sea transport affect the price of commodities. Ample evidence of this was furnished by the country's experience during the Great War. A large proportion of the increase in the cost of food and raw material was caused by the diminished volume of supplies received from abroad. That diminution

was not due to any shortage of supplies at the overseas sources, neither was it due to any shortage of ships. It was mainly due to the congestion of our ports which entailed the lengthy detention of large and valuable ships therein and their conversion for a considerable period of each year into floating warehouses. This represented a sheer waste of sea-power; by reducing the number of sea voyages which a ship was able to make it brought the country to the verge of disaster.

That prodigious wastage of Britain's sea-power occurred during the six most fateful years in our history, 1915-1920. During the sixty years which have elapsed since 1865, there has been a steadily increasing wastage of sea-power generally, due to the failure of the nation and its governors to realise the true value and importance of British seaports and the necessity for maintenance of a regular service of ships operating between the whole of those ports.

It is also of importance to remember that an economic loss has been and is still being inflicted, not only upon shipowners but also upon the nation, by conditions—capable of being remedied—which compel the employment of an unnecessarily large



S.S. *Toward*, 1571 tons. Clyde Shipping Co., Ltd. Fast Passenger and Cargo Services.





capital in the performance of a national service—in other words, when three ships must be employed to do the work which could be performed by two, provided the conditions permitted real efficiency.

## CHAPTER VI

It will be realised from a consideration of facts set forth in the last chapter that the fullest possible use must be made of both ocean-going and coastwise vessels if Britain is to recover her pre-war prosperity. Only by that means can the volume of supplies of food and raw material be increased sufficiently to reduce the cost of living and the selling prices of our products.

Here it becomes necessary to consider the national traffic problem as a whole. Taking the year 1913 as our example, we find that the aggregate imports from overseas totalled 56,002,000 tons, whilst our exports (excluding coal) were 16,937,000 tons. A substantial proportion of the imports are doubtless consumed at the port of arrival, and some portion of the exports likewise originate in the port of departure. The remainder of the imports must be transported from the port of arrival to the point of consumption and the

goods manufactured for export at inland centres must also be transported from the point of production to the port of dispatch. It is obvious that every form of transport, by sea and river, by canal, railway, and road, must take its part in the performance of this huge task. It is submitted that every class of transport should function on economic and nationally advantageous lines, and that each should be enabled, by contributing its quota of service, to earn a reasonable reward. It is further submitted that where a vast transport machine necessarily a monopoly, such as a port, is run under statutory authority, it is essential that the machine should be thoroughly efficient and that its administration shall be conducted on principles which do not conflict with national interests.

Presuming general acceptance of these conditions, if we examine the national transport problem in greater detail, we discover that more than three-quarters of the 73,000,000 tons of imports and exports (excluding coal) for the year 1913 were concentrated in a small number of ports—twelve, to be exact—and the magnitude of their overseas trade justly entitled the following to be described as—

## OCEAN PORTS

London	Bristol and Avonmouth
Liverpool	Newcastle
Hull	Leith
Glasgow	Grimsby
Cardiff	Southampton
Manchester	Dundee

It is also worthy of note that more than half of the nation's imports for the year 1913 were handled by the first five ports on this list.

In addition to these great Ocean Ports, Greenock, Preston, Swansea, Newport, Plymouth, Goole, Middlesbrough, Sunderland, Tyne, and Aberdeen obtain a share of the overseas trade, and with the twelve ports previously enumerated they may be regarded as the principal ports used for the reception and distribution of overseas and domestic commerce. They are, in fact, huge reservoirs into which all nations are pouring year by year the millions of tons of products of all kinds which we describe as imports and exports. Next, there are the fifty-eight smaller ports which are worked mainly in connection with the principal (or Ocean) ports. To facilitate the reader's grasp of the subject a list of these ports is appended,

## COASTWISE TRADE OF UNITED KINGDOM 61

and their position in relation to that of the Ocean Ports can be traced upon the map which appears facing page 64.

### GLASGOW AREA (4 PORTS)

Ayr	Greenock
Girvan and Stranraer	Ardrossan

### MERSEY AREA (11 PORTS)

Barrow	Deganwy, Rhyl and
Fleetwood	Mostyn
Workington	Silloth
Aberdovey and Bar-	Maryport
mouth	Holyhead
Connah's Quay	Bangor
Carnarvon and Portmadoc	

### BRISTOL AREA (19 PORTS)

Cardigan	Llanelly
Portcawl	Port Talbot
Swansea	Pembroke
Lydney	Falmouth
Teignmouth and Dart-	Poole
mouth	Torquay
Weymouth	Bridgewater



## 62 COASTWISE TRADE OF UNITED KINGDOM

### BRISTOL AREA (*continued*).

Fowey	Plymouth
Barnstaple	Penzance
Exmouth	Padstow

### LONDON AREA (9 PORTS)

Yarmouth	Newhaven
Littlehampton	Lowestoft
Wisbech	Harwich and Ipswich
Dover	Richborough
King's Lynn	

### HULL AREA (2 PORTS)

Boston	Wisbech
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### NEWCASTLE AREA (5 PORTS)

Amble and Blyth	Sunderland
Stockton	Hartlepool
Middlesbrough	

### LEITH AREA (8 PORTS)

Berwick	Montrose
Peterhead	Macduff
Inverness	Lossiemouth
Aberdeen	Dundee

To enable the nation to obtain the greatest benefit from the shipping engaged in the overseas

trade it is essential that the first consideration of every Ocean Port Authority should be to ensure a "quick turn-round" of the ships, or in other words, that the time spent in discharging and loading cargo, and in fuelling and provisioning, should be as short as possible. To that end every effort should be bent, and every form of transport should be employed for the conveyance of incoming and outgoing cargoes which can be utilised in accordance with the principles we have laid down. Has that been done? It must be recorded that most of the Ocean Port Authorities have failed throughout the last half-century to realise the local and national advantages which would have accrued from the maintenance of the Coastal Shipping Entrances at the same ratio to Ocean Shipping Entrances as that at which they stood in the middle of the last century. That failure has shorn most of our ocean ports of nearly one-half of the facilities for discharging and loading ocean cargoes that might be accomplished. Those tasks have been increasingly concentrated on that side of the ocean-going vessels adjacent to the quay. Transhipment from ocean ship direct to coastwise vessel, or to barges which could be employed to feed the coastwise vessel, has been

studiously neglected. To make matters worse, some of the Port Authorities have treated the coastwise trade as the Cinderella of the transport world, and the failure to meet its requirements, and especially its relegation to the outworn and obsolete sections of their undertakings, has added enormously to its handicap in the competition with rail transport.

This attitude on the part of Ocean Port Authorities has been due largely to the prosperity resulting from the enormous growth of the overseas trade, brought about by conditions in the creation of which they have had little part.

If proof be required of this failure of the Ocean Ports to make the fullest possible use of coastwise shipping, we may instance the facts for the Port of Liverpool. Foreign import cargoes for the twelve months ending September, 1923, totalled 4,633,121 tons. Of this vast total only 174,085 tons, or less than 4 per cent., were transhipped by coastwise vessels.

This amazing declension of Liverpool's coastwise trade is partly the result of long years of neglect by the Port Authority, and partly the result of grossly unfair railway competition. But so far as the leaders of the shipping industry are

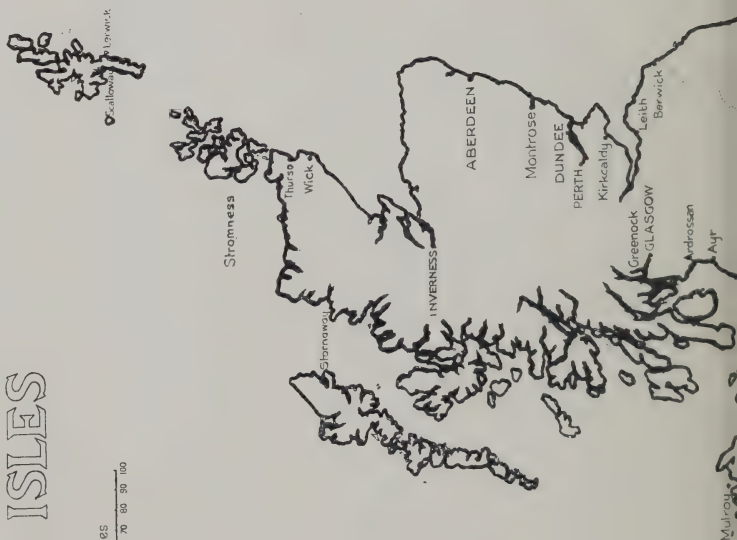


# BRITISH ISLES

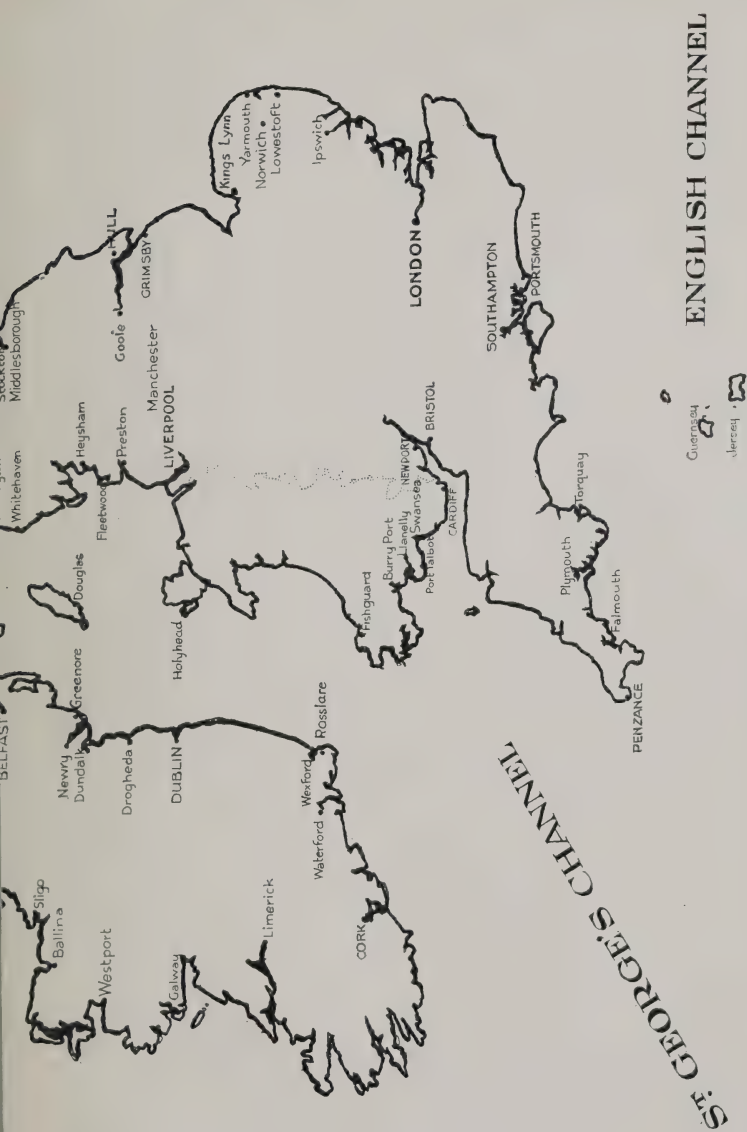
English Miles  
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

NORTH  
SEA

ATLANTIC  
OCEAN







Map showing Ports served by Regular Coastwise and Cross-Channel Services.



concerned, they have not been blind to the conditions imposed upon the Coastwise Trade, nor have they been silent regarding the results. That powerful body, the Liverpool Steamship Owners' Association, has for many years agitated for the alteration of these conditions, and warning after warning has been published of their detrimental effect upon the nation's trade.

Had the evil consequences of the neglect of the Coastwise Trade been restricted to the Ocean Ports themselves and to the shipowners engaged in that trade, it might not have amounted to a national disaster. Unfortunately, however, the decline of coastwise shipping, due in part to the causes we have indicated, has reacted adversely upon the subsidiary ports which are an asset of the greatest possible value to the nation and capable of great development. Their revenue has diminished during the last half-century to such an extent that it has been rendered impossible for the majority to adopt the progressive measures in regard to accommodation and equipment that were essential to increasing usefulness and prosperity. Stagnation and decay has been the natural result. Traders and capital have been driven to seek "fresh woods and pastures new,"

whilst existing facilities and labour have been largely wasted. That so many of our ports should ever have been permitted to fall into their present condition of inadequacy is a striking proof of the fact that prior to 1914 we were living in a "fool's paradise." The war taught us that we cannot have too many ships or too many sailors. It also proved our utter dependence upon the efficiency of our ports. If the nation is wise it will not need the bitter experience of another war to compel the reorganisation and restoration of all our ports to a condition which will enable them to play their proper part in achieving prosperity in peace and security in war.

Britain's maritime ability is alike the source of its security and prosperity. It is a heritage which must be preserved jealously. Upon each generation falls the duty of handing down, unimpaired, to its successors not merely the glorious traditions associated with the conquest of the seas, but also the instruments by which that conquest has been achieved.

## CHAPTER VII

THE decrease in the world's purchasing power renders it imperative that every possible effort should be made to lower prices by increasing the volume of supplies from overseas, and to reduce both domestic and foreign transport costs to the minimum.

That will not be accomplished until domestic transport has been organised on a truly economic basis. The nation must refuse to allow the owners of one method of domestic transport to destroy another method for purely selfish reasons and without regard to the national interest. The urgency of this demand is heightened by the fact that the nation has already suffered enormous loss through the disregard of this principle, and that loss will increase progressively until reorganisation has been accomplished.

Human nature being what it is, it would be absurd to expect the individual manufacturer or



trader to pay a larger sum for the transport of commodities between two points by one particular form of transport as compared with another because, from a national standpoint, that form was the most economic. The individual must consider the personal and immediate advantage. It is for the nation in its own interests to ensure the provision of truly economic forms of transport. It is not suggested that the nation should own the means of transport but rather that by its ordinances it should render the truly economic form of transport attractive to the individual.

Little regard has been paid in the past by those in authority to this principle. The railway companies, acting naturally as individual entities, have been permitted consistently to disregard it. Railway rates have been fixed for the purpose of capturing the whole of the internal transport trade irrespective of the national advantage. The "port-to-port" rates provide the most glaring example. By means of those rates, commodities are transported over long distances at charges which are below cost, the difference being made good by unduly increasing the charges made to traders between points where sea transport cannot

compete. That action on the part of the railway companies, although selfish, has been natural and justifiable because they were conducting their businesses in their individual interests and without regard to national considerations.

During the War, however, the railways were taken over and managed by the State. To the eternal disgrace of British administration the principles of true economics were entirely disregarded. The railways were *compelled by law* to carry commodities at far less than cost, the difference being provided by the taxpayer. Great as was the financial loss thus sustained, it sinks into insignificance as compared with the consequences which were inflicted upon the community as a whole.

The cost of sea transport, carried on by private shipping companies, rose enormously, and as they lacked the resources of the Treasury, their charges had to be correspondingly increased. This led to the transfer from shipping to the railways of an enormous volume of goods formerly carried by coastwise steamer between the ports of Great Britain.

The railways proved unequal to a task which

ought never to have been imposed upon them. Their locomotives and rolling stock were inadequate in number. Their goods stations and sidings became choked. The acceptance of goods for transit had to be repeatedly suspended, with the result that the quays of our ocean ports were piled up with goods urgently needed in all parts of the Kingdom, and it was at times almost impossible to secure sufficient quay space to enable the most urgent exports to be loaded into such ships as were available. In fact, the nation was in danger of perishing from a disease known as "*Congestion of the Ports*," and so acute did the peril become that the Government had to intervene and compel traders to use coastwise shipping—at the same time granting a subsidy to such users equal to the difference between the artificially low railway rates and the higher but economic charges imposed upon shipping companies by the conditions of the time.

The grant of a subsidy was a temporary measure designed to relieve the congestion; when that had been achieved, it was withdrawn coincidentally with a general increase in railway rates, but without any effort on the part of the

Government to prevent the railways from pursuing the policy hitherto adopted of capturing the "port to port" traffic, irrespective alike of the economic factor and of the national advantages which accrue from the prosperity of British shipping.

The Railways Act of 1921, however, promises to end that state of affairs. Upon the tribunal which has been appointed for the purpose of revising railway freights, the duty is imposed of only sanctioning such rates as are economic—that is, each rate must be high enough to cover the actual cost of the service performed, and must also contribute its proper quota to the net annual revenue which the railway is permitted to earn for its proprietors. When "the appointed day" arrives upon which these economic charges come into force we shall see the dawn of a new era of prosperity for British shipping in which all may rejoice. Railway competition will still exist, but if the spirit of the Act of Parliament be observed it will be conducted on terms of equity and be based upon those considerations other than price which justly determine the form of transport which is to be employed. Eternal vigilance is said to be the price of safety, and it is to be

hoped that those powerful national and local associations which exist to foster and protect British trade will fully realise the importance of transport and seek to safeguard the nation from the abuses which arise through sectional aggressiveness.





S.S. *Lady Limerick*. British and Irish Steam Packet Co., Ltd. Liverpool-Dublin Nightly Express Passenger Service.



## CHAPTER VIII

IN previous chapters we have outlined the causes for the declension of coastwise shipping which has deprived so many of the subsidiary ports of their power to contribute adequately to the national well-being, and will render the restoration of the Coastwise Trade to the position which it occupied sixty years ago, a lengthy and strenuous task.

As we have already shown, the Railways Act of 1921 holds out the promise of the removal of that selfish and uneconomic competition on the part of the railways which has for so long threatened overwhelming disaster to all whose capital and labour were invested in the subsidiary ports and the ships which served them. The removal of that obstacle to the prosperity of the Coastwise Trade was enormously difficult of attainment, and yet simple because it could be

achieved by a statutory enactment. All that remains to be done in this connection is to see that administrative measures do not rob the coastwise trader of the benefits which the Railways Act of 1921 purports to bestow upon him.

The achievement in our Ocean Ports of the facilities which are essential to the future development of coastwise shipping and the restoration to efficiency of the Subsidiary Ports are tasks which cannot be accomplished by legislative enactment; they depend upon the vision, faith, and enterprise possessed by the Port Authorities, and also upon the readiness of the Coastwise Shipping Industry to satisfy the demand for coastwise transport which is sure to arise in a not too distant future.

This volume will fail in its purpose unless its attitude towards the future of the Coastwise Trade is constructive rather than critical. In so far as statements have been made herein which reflect upon authority, administrative or otherwise, they are statements of fact, not opinions coloured by personal or other considerations. This method will be continued. Deficiencies in the accommodation and facilities requisite to the prosperity of

the Coastwise Trade will be detailed. In every instance incontrovertible evidence will be available. Existing conditions thus revealed will require no other condemnation. Justification for delay in remedying these conditions may in some instances be possible, and when known it will be furnished, but it is impossible to extenuate the conduct of those Port Authorities who for decades past have steadfastly declined to ameliorate working conditions, apparently for no other reason than that the trade affected was "only the Coastwise," and who loftily ignore the protests and appeals which are made to them for special consideration.

The provision in all our ports, of accommodation and facilities—that is, working conditions—suitable for the 20th century is a vital necessity. Is it too much to hope, that those who occupy positions of responsibility as members of the Port Authorities will individually and collectively recognise that fact? Their immunity from influences which operate in the case of Members of Parliament and of civic bodies generally does not lessen, but rather increase the necessity for the exercise of promptness in dealing with these matters.



Before proceeding, however, to the consideration of existing conditions, it may be desirable to outline those ideal port conditions which are capable of attainment by every Port Authority which resolutely attempts to provide them.

- (1) *Berthing*.—Every ship on arriving in port should be able to proceed *without delay* to the berth allotted to her at which the processes of discharging and loading cargo are to be performed. The conditions of access to and departure from the berth should be such as to ensure that the total cargo space should be capable of utilisation at neap as well as spring tides.
- (2) *Transshipment*.—It should be possible to secure economic overside delivery from ocean to coastwise vessels, and *vice versa*.
- (3) *Bunkering*.—If this operation cannot be conveniently conducted whilst cargo is being discharged and loaded, and the ship has to be moved for the purpose, no undue delay should be incurred thereby.

(4) *The quay accommodation* should include—

- (a) *Double-story sheds*, substantial in structure, adequate in size, and smoothly floored, fitted with adequate mechanical and labour-saving equipment.
- (b) *Railway lines* alongside the ship, connected with the goods stations.
- (c) *Road vehicles*: Ample access should be provided.
- (d) *Mechanical equipment* should be provided for loading and unloading vehicles and transporting goods from shed to ship, and *vice versa*.

(5) *Labour* should be available in sufficient quantity, at any hour of the day or night, to permit cargo operations to be begun without delay and carried on without a break.

(6) *Lighting* should be adequate to ensure night-working.

The creation of the ideal port conditions will not suffice. At the present time the enterprising

shipowner is straining against the leash of restricted facilities, but he dare not embark upon a policy of development until such time as conditions enable so expensive a piece of transport machinery as a modern steamship to make a sufficiently large number of voyages to show a profit on the capital outlay. Then, bigger and faster ships will play their part in the restoration of the Coastwise Trade.

## CHAPTER IX

HAVING presented a statement of Port Working Conditions which would enable the shipping industry to function advantageously, we now proceed to the consideration of the actual conditions with which the Mercantile Marine has to contend and which lead to the undue detention in port of its ships.

Taking those conditions in the same sequence, we shall deal first of all with the question of Berthing. It will be obvious that this operation is infinitely easier of achievement in the case of those ports where the quay is accessible at all states of tide. Fortunately for the Coastwise Trade there are a number where this condition obtains. In all instances, however, where coastwise berths are located within a dock, access is dependent upon the tidal conditions existing when the vessel arrives in port.

Unfortunately for the shipowner, it is impossible for him to arrange, as a matter of course,

that the arrival of his ship in a particular port shall coincide with the comparatively brief period during which the state of the tide permits the dock-gates to be open.

Some coastwise and cross-channel services are run upon schedules with almost equal precision to those prevailing upon the railways. In those cases, it is absolutely impossible to adjust the time of arrival to suit the daily changes in tide times. So far as the remainder of the Coastwise Trade is concerned, sailings cannot be organised on any system which will ensure arrival in such ports during the two short periods in each day when immediate entrance to the docks is possible.

Observe the effects of these conditions. In the case of regularly-timed services there are bound to be a large number of days in each year when a ship arrives in port too late or too early to dock promptly. Consequently, the vessel is rendered idle for periods ranging from two to ten hours, whilst its running expenses are only diminished by the decrease in the amount of fuel required during these hours; nor is that the only loss sustained. The delay in gaining access to the berth may prevent, under existing labour conditions, any attempt being made to begin the







S.S. *Halcyon*. General Steam Navigation Company.

(Reproduced by permission of the Company from *A Century of Sea Trading*, by L. Cope Cornford, and published by A. & C. Black, Ltd., ros. 6d.)

discharge of cargo on the same day, or should it be essential that the ship should leave dock at the next tide, it may preclude the loading of the ship with the whole of the outward cargo available.

So far we have dealt merely with the adverse results occasioned by the delay in obtaining ingress to the dock. Exactly similar adverse results are caused by the delay in securing egress. On regularly timed services, it frequently happens that in order to keep her engagements with the public, a ship is obliged to leave dock and lie idly in harbour for many hours. The costliness of these delays cannot be estimated. Careful calculation in one port alone has shown that certain companies suffer financial loss to an amount ranging between ten and twenty thousand pounds per annum. They are also under the necessity of employing three ships on particular services which, given favourable conditions, might be just as efficiently conducted with two. This represents an enormous addition to the capital upon which revenue must be earned, and lessens the possibility of securing an increased volume of traffic through a lowering of freights and fares.

These facts demonstrate that from the national standpoint the advantages to be gained by the

establishment of port conditions under which ships might gain access to their berths at all states of the tide would be colossal.

The adverse effects of the conditions to which we have referred, are not confined to the shipping companies. In some instances, they react directly upon particular ports by compelling discrimination on the part of the senders of traffic as to the route by which consignments are dispatched. Take, for example, the enormous traffic in foodstuffs passing between the Irish Free State and Northern England. To a considerable extent this traffic consists of perishable produce. It is consigned from the interior of Ireland to the interior English towns which constitute Ireland's best market.

Speed in transit is of vital importance, delay may result in the failure to reach the English market whilst the produce is in perfect condition, with consequent danger so far as the Irish exporter is concerned, not only of the loss of the value of the produce dispatched, plus transit charges, but the even greater risk of the cancellation of future orders. That is the sole reason why of two routes one only is generally utilised for such traffic.

There are serious and costly effects occasioned

by the failure of Port Authorities to modernise the entrance to certain of the older docks, where the cills were originally constructed to suit the type of vessel then in existence. The invert or camber on these prevents steamers of modern construction with the flatter bottoms, from negotiating the entrance at the full draft which the level of the water in the docks permits, with the result that modern steamers using the dock in question are unable to utilise the whole of their cargo space.

Whether the capital outlay involved in the reconstruction of these ancient entrances be large or small ought to be determined, and information should be forthcoming as to whether such outlay would be warranted. Should it appear that the outlay would be directly or indirectly remunerative it should be undertaken without delay, not merely in the interests of the port itself, but because the advancement of shipping developments and the reduction in transit costs are of vital importance from the national standpoint.

We cannot conclude our review of this question without admitting that in those ports which consist of a system of enclosed docks, the capital outlay which would have to be undertaken in order to enable the docks to be accessible at all



states of the tide, would be enormous, and that in all probability it would prove to be beyond the financial ability of the individual undertaking; indeed, that is probably the chief reason why this problem has not been solved already. The advantages to be gained are too clearly apparent to need argument, and it may be assumed with safety that finance has been the stumbling-block. No European nation is so completely dependent as Britain upon its ports, yet the Port Authorities of most of the other European nations are able to obtain from national sources the funds that are essential to their efficiency. Our British ports, whether owned by municipal authorities, as in the case of Bristol and Newcastle, or by statutory public authorities, as in the case of London and Liverpool, receive scant consideration from the Government as regards the provision of cheap capital.

The Government's financial co-operation is almost entirely limited to the granting of permission to raise capital on the security of the undertaking. Provided the port be owned by a Municipal Authority, it may, with the approval of the citizens, levy a rate to meet the interest charges on the capital employed in its port.

Should it be a Statutory Authority the interest charges upon the capital invested must be provided from its own revenue; that revenue can only take the form of dues, and so sensitive is trade, that there is always the danger that an increase in these charges will speedily lead to an actual decrease in the total revenue receivable. Small wonder that, as a rule, capital outlay is only undertaken after proof that it will prove interest-earning.

The time must come when the Government will be compelled to recognise the impossibility of the maintenance of our maritime supremacy unless the advantages which accrue to our continental rivals from the free use of national capital are counterbalanced by similar contributions from the British Exchequer, which will set our Port Authorities free from the necessity to restrict capital expenditure unless it can be demonstrated that such expenditure will prove to be a remunerative investment.

The justice of this claim for Government assistance will be readily seen when it is pointed out that in several existing ports the entrances to many of the docks may be compared with the "bottle necks" on arterial roads, which are being

abolished so rapidly by the aid of national funds. The improvement of our sea roads is of equal importance, and the chief cause for the neglect which they have suffered is the limited number of *individuals* who suffer inconvenience thereby. The real justification for the use of national funds, however, is the national benefit which such grants achieve, and on this basis there can be no question that the demand for the expenditure of national funds upon the reconstruction of the means of ingress to our docks would be thoroughly justifiable.

#### TRANSHIPMENT

The development of the facilities for transhipment of cargoes in our Ocean Ports is deeply to be desired, not merely in the interests of the Coastwise Trade, but because it would enhance the speed with which both ocean and coastwise vessels could be discharged and loaded, thus assisting to secure that "quick turn-round" which is of vital importance. By widening that channel of influx and efflux, the landwise operations would be reduced in magnitude, and the tendency to congestion of quays, warehouses, and railways substantially reduced. In some ports, transhipment

of cargoes scarcely exists, and its absence robs those ports of nearly one-half of the possible means of dealing with the incoming and outgoing traffic. It would be just as sensible to ordain that only one-armed dockers should be employed.

These observations are not applicable to all our Ocean Ports. In London, for instance, the delivery overside to barges for transshipment either coastwise or by some other form of water transport, reaches not less than 75 per cent. of the total imports. In Liverpool the other extreme is reached. Largely that is due to the difference in the organisation of the two ports as regards the handling of cargo. In Liverpool this is entirely in the hands of a limited number of ship-owning and other firms, whose representatives are licensed as Master Porters and Master Stevedores. No cargo can be discharged or loaded except by the employment of one or other of these firms, and with few exceptions, such as ores and grain in bulk, the goods are landed, sorted, weighed, and delivered to carts, or stowed back on quay. This old-established custom is apparently suitable to merchants, who pay the cost of quay operations, take delivery in Liverpool, and in many cases sell on Master Porters' weights. It also enables the



shipowner to ascertain the weight of the various consignments on which to charge ocean freight, but with goods in transit for other ports this expense would be saved when delivered overside and the Bill of Lading weight accepted for freight purposes or the correct weight ascertained on arrival at destination.

Overside traffic should be exempt from Master Portage, and the same encouragement given to overside delivery on imports as on exports where no such charge exists.

The system to which we have referred helps to make Liverpool a "dear" port. It certainly adds considerably to the costs of coastwise transport as compared with overside delivery, thus rendering it more difficult for that branch of transport to compete with the railways, who have loaded the dice of competition with the uneconomic "port-to-port" rates.

#### BUNKERING

In 1913, the total quantity of coal shipped as bunkers at United Kingdom ports was upwards of 21,000,000 tons. This fact alone demonstrates the importance of the arrangements for placing the coal on board ship.





S.S. *Stephen Furness*, 1712 tons. Tyne-Tees Steam Shipping Co., Ltd. Sunk by enemy action during the Great War.



The conditions in regard to bunkering vary considerably in different ports. In many instances coal has to be conveyed by road vehicles to the quay. In other cases it may be transferred from barges lying alongside, or again, in the larger ports, mechanical bunkering appliances are provided which afford the most economical method of getting coal aboard. Where coal is being brought to the quay by road vehicles, it is practically impossible, without enormous capital outlay, to make any change, and it is physical conditions rather than the neglect of the Port Authority which inflict this burden upon the Coastwise Trade. There are, however, vexatious and costly delays in some ports which are due entirely to the failure of the Port Authority to make comparatively cheap improvements in construction and equipment which would obviate a great deal of waste. What justification can be found, for instance, for a vessel being delayed a matter of hours upon its visit to the coal tips, a distance of a few hundred yards, merely because a shortage of pumping power renders the process of equalising the level of two adjoining docks abnormally lengthy?

Fortunately the advent of oil-burning steamers tends to minimise these difficulties and, subject to

the progressive development of that type of steamer, even those ports which are most seriously handicapped as regards bunkering arrangements may eventually find themselves in a much more satisfactory position. Meanwhile it is eminently desirable that every effort should be made to reduce bunkering costs to the lowest possible point.

#### QUAY ACCOMMODATION

The importance of the character of quay accommodation and equipment cannot be over-estimated; they determine the speed with which the twin process of discharging inward and loading outward cargo can be accomplished. Broadly speaking, it may be accepted as an axiom that the smaller the amount of time occupied in unloading and loading a vessel, the lower will be the aggregate cost of the operations. How then may these costs be reduced to the lowest possible point?

A primary condition is the substitution of mechanical for man power. It is imperative, also, that the sheds upon the quay, wherein a large proportion of the cargo must necessarily be handled, should be skilfully designed and sufficiently

commodious to facilitate handling. In those ports where the Coastwise Trade is conducted by vessels of 500 tons and upwards, double-story sheds should be provided. Occupying only the same quay space, they afford twice the floor area, whilst the amount of work which can be done in the day is doubled.

A survey of existing conditions in British ports reveals that, so far as quay accommodation and equipment are concerned, it is the exception rather than the rule, to find the Port Authorities providing anything equal to the requirements of the present time; in fact, modern shed accommodation, suitably equipped with mechanical appliances, is conspicuous by its absence. The only sheds upon the quays at one particular port are the wooden structures originally erected in the middle of the last century. That doubtless explains their complete lack of mechanical equipment, they do not possess sufficient stability to render such equipment possible, whilst the floors are in a condition which renders the labour of trucking goods across the shed a herculean task. It is to be recorded that these conditions have been endured by the Coastwise Trade for many years. They form one of the causes which have



led to the diminishing volume of coastwise traffic using the port in question, and it cannot even be said by way of excuse in this case, as in some others where conditions are equally disadvantageous, that there are natural physical reasons which render improvement difficult. Spacious docks and the provision of spacious quays have been rendered comparatively futile by the failure to provide the adequate sheds and equipment which are essential. It is amazing that any Port Authority should fail to appreciate that the smaller the amount of time spent by a ship in the docks the greater the number of voyages it can make, and that this increase in the number of voyages would add proportionately to the dues receivable.

So far as the provision of railway lines for the benefit of the Coastwise Trade is concerned, it is deeply to be regretted that in the majority of the ports these facilities are seldom to be found, whilst properly constructed loading platforms for road-hauled traffic are few and far between.

#### LABOUR

The establishment of the eight-hour day for the dock labourer has had far-reaching effects.

Potentially, it has diminished the capacity of our ports, and thereby reduced the volume of trade. The problem presented is a thorny one. High charges for cargo loaded or discharged by night shifts cannot be equitably distributed over the general cost of the whole cargo, yet unless high rates be paid for night work, the docker cannot be prevailed upon to present himself for duty. On the other hand, there is always the danger that if the rate for the night work be made too attractive there will be a shortage of dockers presenting themselves for work in the daytime.

It is not the purpose of this book to offer a solution of so difficult a problem. Suffice it to say that provided the dock labourer puts his back into his work, no one in authority will begrudge the present rates of pay for day work. But it would greatly assist the revival of our shipping prosperity if labour were available both by day and night on equitable terms in order that the suspension of cargo operations should no longer be necessary.

There is one further aspect of Port Conditions to which reference must be made, viz. the location of the docks placed at the disposal of Coastwise vessels. Being the original trade, in all

ports except Manchester and one or two others which have been designed and constructed in modern times, it has usually had the advantage of being located in the most central docks which are in close proximity to the premises occupied by the majority of the merchants, warehousemen, and manufacturers who are the largest shippers and consignees of coastwise traffic.

There exists at present a tendency on the part of Port Authorities to relegate the Coastwise Trade to docks which are far less conveniently situated. It is to be hoped that these bodies will give the greatest consideration to the advantages which accrue from the central position and refrain from interference except for reasons which are of paramount importance. The removal of the Coastwise Trade to less advantageous locations would be an immense handicap in favour of the railways, whose goods stations are always to be found in readily accessible positions, and both at the present juncture and in the future, the Coastwise Trade will need the most favourable conditions to enable it to achieve any large measure of success.

It is impossible, within the limits of our space, to present a complete category of the difficulties

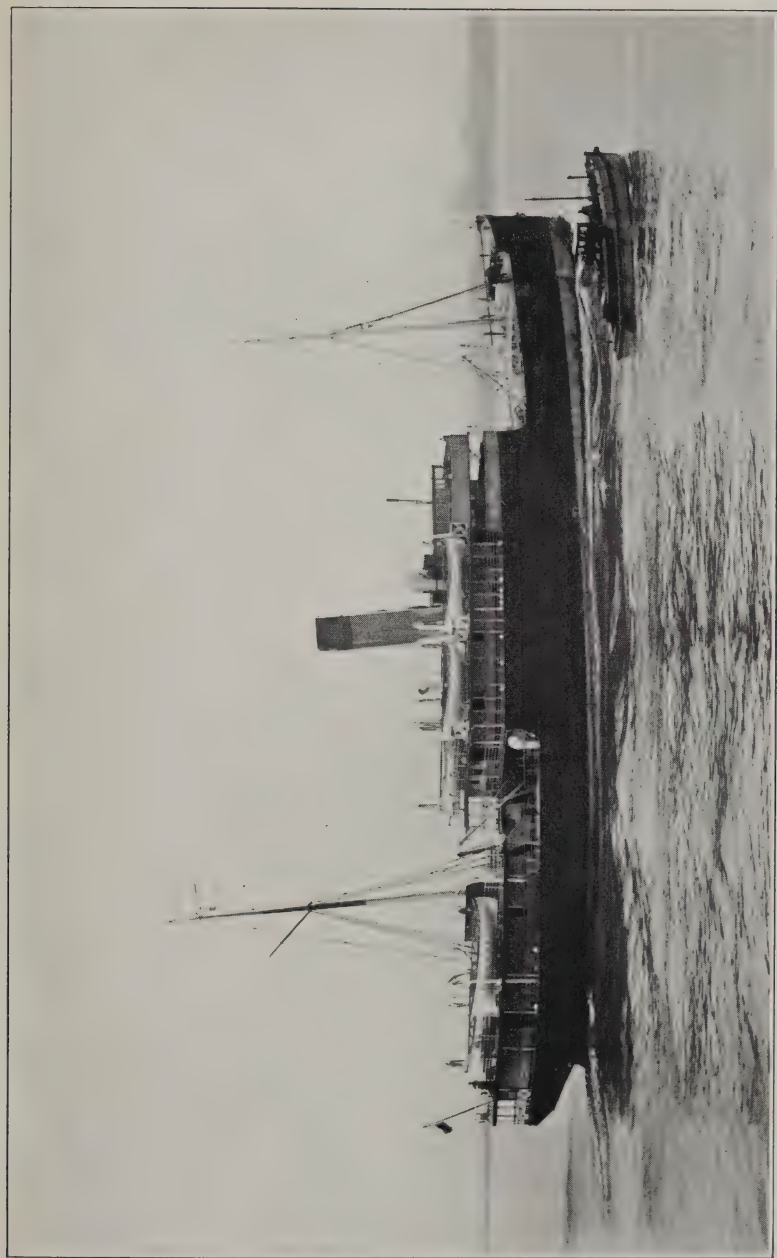
which need to be remedied if the Coastwise Trade is to be helped along the road to recovery. We can only bespeak on its behalf the exhaustive consideration by each Port Authority of the conditions under which it is working to-day.

## CHAPTER X

THE future of the Coastwise Trade does not depend solely upon the rectification of the conditions under which it is being conducted at present. The day may come when a scientific control of national transport will prescribe that certain classes of goods requiring to be transported between certain points, must utilise sea-transport to the fullest possible extent. Pending that time, the Coastwise Traders must depend mainly upon the enterprise and efficiency with which they conduct their business for that development which will not only yield satisfactory financial results, but will also enable them to render the national service which is the true justification for their existence.

Full value must be given to the consignor of traffic in return for the freights paid, and as sea-borne traffic must always be covered by insurance, it follows that under normal circumstances, these





S.S. *Perth*, 2063 tons. Dundee, Perth, and London Shipping Co., Ltd. Fast Passenger and Cargo Services.



freights can never reach the same level as railway rates. As the Coastwise Trade must constantly face railway competition, it is clear that one condition of success must be the ability to offer to consignors a performance of the transit operation approximating as nearly as possible to that of the railway. That necessitates regularity of dispatch and arrival, increased speeds of vessels between ports, and more expeditious handling as regards loading and discharge. It also calls for greater efficiency in regard to the organisation of collection and delivery services, and the organisation of co-ordinated inland transport services within a certain radius of each port.

How may these ends be achieved? That is a question of vital importance to the Coastwise Trade, and far easier of evasion than of answer. Shirking the issues will not avail those who are concerned either for their individual or for the national prosperity. Facts must be faced. Between the ports shown in the map of the British Isles facing p. 64, regular coastwise services exist. In some instances although the total amount of cargo to be carried between two ports is barely sufficient to load one vessel to capacity, two or more vessels are running between

these ports with part cargoes. That state of affairs involves a huge waste of both capital and labour, which might be eliminated with advantage to the companies concerned and to both shippers and consignees. The man who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before is rightly described as a public benefactor. The same term is as truly applicable to those who enable one ship and one crew to perform the national service which at present employs the capital represented by two ships and the labour of two crews.

The elimination of the waste which occurs through the unnecessary duplication of sailings between the same ports depends upon the degree of confidence which can be established between competitors, and upon their recognition of the fact that the future development of the Coastwise Trade as a whole is of greater importance than the maintenance of every individual existing service. It is not suggested that competition should be abolished. That can never be done upon the sea, so long as Britain retains its belief in the principle of Individualism. But unless those who desire to avoid the perils of Collectivism are prepared to conduct their individual concerns in a manner which avoids the totally unnecessary

waste of national resources, they will eventually find it impossible to defeat the arguments of those who see in Collectivism a sure and certain remedy for such evils.

Co-operation between competitors is being practised upon some routes with a consequent reduction of mileage and expense, whilst aggregate receipts are maintained. These results have been achieved without infringing upon the liberty or dignity of the parties concerned. Only by the extension of such methods can the best interests of the nation and of all who are engaged in the Coastwise Trade be secured. It will enable services to be organised with that frequency which meets the fullest needs of both shippers and consignees. It will pave the way for the provision of bigger, better, and faster boats, capable of carrying all classes of goods. It will achieve, for those who co-operate, a financial return commensurate with the service rendered, and gradually enable the Coastwise Trade to recover the relative position in regard to the Ocean Trade which it occupied in the middle of the 19th century. It will most certainly hasten that reduction in transport costs which is essential to the revival of trade.



## 100 COASTWISE TRADE OF UNITED KINGDOM

No regular Coastwise Service can hope to be successful unless its organisation is thoroughly efficient. Practical and competent management, keenly alive to the fluctuations of trade and its varying needs, and possessing a complete grasp of the details of daily operations, must be linked on terms of good-will with staffs both ashore and afloat, determined to maintain the prestige of their branch of the Mercantile Marine. The Coastwise Trade has a brilliant record of national service in Peace and War. It has a part to play in the future which is of vital importance to the Nation.





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